



Date: October 20, 2005

TO: Board Members - Parks and Recreation
FROM: General Manager - Parks and Recreation
SUBJECT: Aquatic Services Renewal Plan Update

RECOMMENDATION

- A. *THAT the Mount Pleasant and Sunset Outdoor Pools continue to be operated through the 2006 and 2007 summer seasons, as long as no extraordinary additional costs are incurred in doing so;*
- B. *THAT continued operation of one or both of the pools for the 2008 season and beyond be reviewed with reference to the following considerations:*
 - *the state of readiness of the new Mount Pleasant and Sunset Community Centres;*
 - *the cost and benefits associated with re-development of either pool once the community centres have been relocated;*
 - *the outcome of a public consultation process in the Sunset Community;*
 - *the availability of externally-derived capital funds, possibly matchable with allocation to the re-development project(s) in the 2009 – 2011 Capital Plan cycle;*
 - *the impact on overall patronage by the renewed pools at Killarney and Renfrew;*
 - *the distribution of public pools throughout the city.*
- C. *THAT staff be directed to report back to the Board, with recommendations arising from this review, on or before March 2007.*

POLICY

On September 20, 2005 Council passed the following motion in the context of confirming funding allocations for the 2006 – 2008 Capital Plan:

THAT Council encourage the Park Board to review options for keeping the Mount Pleasant outdoor pool open at least until completion of the proposed replacement for Percy Norman Pool at the new Hillcrest Centre and request the Board to report back on the additional costs that would be necessary in the Operating Budget.

On September 19, 2005 the Board passed the following motions pertinent to the above Council motion:

“...BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

- 1. The Park Board request that City Council provide operating funds to keep Mount Pleasant Pool open at least until the new aquatic facility at Hillcrest/Riley Park is completed;**
- 2. The Mount Pleasant community, Park Board and Council work together to identify external sources of funding to rebuild the Mount Pleasant outdoor pool, including the possibility of municipal green funds for environmentally-friendly technologies such as solar heating;**
- 3. Staff report back on October 31, 2005 on revising the recommendation of the Aquatic Services Review to include the retention of the Mount Pleasant and Sunset Pools; and,**
- 4. Staff report back on the financial and service strategy to redevelop two neighbourhood outdoor pools in addition to the plan for a city wide pool, two redeveloped community pools, four neighbourhood pools and four major outdoor pools.”**

On March 11, 2002, Park Board approved the following motions:

“THAT the Board endorse the objectives for aquatic renewal described in Aquatic Services Review report, consisting of the following elements:

- 1. One large-scale, destination ‘city-wide’ pool oriented towards family recreation and leisure;**
- 2. Two ‘community pools’ providing specialized features such as therapy, longer length or outdoor swimming; and**
- 3. Four ‘neighbourhood pools’ — modernized versions of the local indoor pools currently in the Park Board inventory, and focusing on swim lessons, fitness and training;**

THAT this model of aquatic services be the framework for capital decision making related to Capital Plan and other major funding opportunities, and with an evaluation of outcomes after the first phase of implementation;

THAT consideration of closing any existing Park Board pools not be given prior to the new or upgraded facilities being in place and should a significant additional operating cost being incurred as a result of this, this will be brought to the attention of the Board;

THAT each project be subject to a community and stakeholder consultation process before it proceeds to the design stage.”

BACKGROUND

The Aquatic Services Renewal Plan (the Plan), (“Executive Summary” Appendix A), outlines a strategy for reconfiguring Vancouver’s aquatic facilities and services to meet the current and future demands of city residents in a fiscally sustainable manner. The Plan strives to balance local neighbourhood needs and service response with those of the City as a whole. The focus of the Plan is on the redevelopment of the Park Board’s indoor pools, in such a way as to deliver the following outcomes:

- Provision of service to an increased number of users (up to 2.4 million swimmers per year from a current capacity of about 1.8 million swimmers per year). The anticipated increase would be due to (a) city population growth, (b) ‘re-capture’ of patrons now traveling out of the city to newer suburban pools, (c) attraction of new patrons to more accessible, varied and enjoyable aquatic programming.
- Reduction of the public subsidy required to operate the aquatic system as a whole (the current subsidy level exceeds 50% of operating costs).

To achieve these objectives, the Plan proposes fewer pools overall, but two pools (Killarney and Percy Norman) to be rebuilt much larger in scale. The remaining two indoor pools could then be closed or continued in operation as “surplus to capacity”.

With respect to the inventory of outdoor pools, the Plan states that “the existing major outdoor pools (Kitsilano, Second Beach, New Brighton and Maple Grove) should be maintained for long term operation. Mount Pleasant and Sunset outdoor pools should be closed as they wear out and as new indoor/outdoor opportunities are developed to replace them. No new stand-alone outdoor pools should be developed.”

In 2004, the combined patronage of all Park Board pools was 1,968,163, with 78% using the indoor pools (open year round) and 22% using outdoor pools (open only in the summer months). The 31,512 visits to Mount Pleasant and Sunset pools in 2004 represented 1.6% of the overall admissions to all Park Board pools in that year.

Mount Pleasant and Sunset Pools are at the end of their expected lifespans; they continue to be operated on a season-to-season basis. In both cases a major mechanical failure or an irreparable breakdown of the tank or piping under the tank will occur in the near future, and necessitate either their permanent closure or capital replacement.

DISCUSSION

This report has been prepared in response to the four Board resolutions passed on September 19, 2005 with respect to the continued operation of the Mount Pleasant and Sunset Pools over the short and long term. To respond to each of the resolutions in turn:

- (1) Operation of Mount Pleasant Pool until the new aquatic facility at Hillcrest/Riley Park is completed:

The current intention is to keep Mount Pleasant Pool in service through to the end of the 2007 season, when the new Mount Pleasant Community Centre is slated to open. This should be possible within the framework of Council's existing operating budget allocation, barring an extraordinary breakdown of the pool's mechanical or structural components. A similar scenario and timeline applies to Sunset Pool and Sunset Community Centre.

The new Percy Norman pool, however, will not be completed until 2009 at the earliest, two years after the opening of the new community centres presents a critical decision point with respect to the continued operation of their associated pools:

- In both cases, essential mechanical systems and service areas for the pools are integrated with a facility slated for demolition.
- Economic and security risks preclude extended retention of the vacant community centre buildings, once the replacement centres are opened.
- The additional cost of selective demolition of the buildings to leave pool-related functions intact, or their replacement with new components, would not be economic in relation to the projected future use of either pool.

At this point in time there appears to be at least a two year gap between when the Mount Pleasant (and Sunset) Pools are decommissioned, and when the pool intended to replace them is ready for service.

The only reasonable method of bridging this gap would be to secure capital funds to replace the pool(s). The requirement of additional operating funds from Council is very much a secondary consideration.

There is no funding allocated or available in the 2006 – 2008 Capital Plan for the replacement of either pool. Funding allocated to the redevelopment of Mount Pleasant Park is sourced from City-wide DCL funds and therefore cannot be used for pool construction.

- (2) Working with the Mount Pleasant community and Council to identify external sources of funding to rebuild the Mount Pleasant outdoor pool.

Staff will follow through on this directive, and report back on outcomes in the context of the work program described in point (4) below.

- (3) Revision of the recommendation of the Aquatic Services Review to include the retention of the Mount Pleasant and Sunset Pools

All park and facility planning is subject to revision through Board resolution. The Aquatic Renewal Plan has already been modified in this way through Board approval of rebuilding Killarney Pool before rebuilding Percy Norman. Board consideration of the future retention of the outdoor pools at Mount Pleasant and Sunset does not require retroactive changes to be made to the recommendations of the Aquatic Renewal Plan.

The plan itself recommends that re-assessment of the future of two “surplus capacity” indoor pools be deferred until after the first phase of renewal is complete, “at which point usage figures will provide further direction.” A similar approach could be taken in the current instance, making a decision with respect to the two outdoor pools when more information is available on:

- What impact the renovations at Renfrew and the rebuilding of Killarney Pool have on pool usage overall, and
- The detailed design, usage capacity and timeline to completion of the new Percy Norman Pool.

(4) Development of a financial and service strategy to redevelop two neighbourhood outdoor pools.

The redevelopment of the two neighbourhood pools would require an infusion of capital funding from as yet unidentified sources, along with a commitment from Council to cover operating costs net of revenue.

As noted above, staff will explore the prospects for external funding to be directed at this project. However, matching money from the City would likely still be necessary, and the earliest opportunity to secure such funding would be in the 2009 – 2011 Capital Plan.

Whether external or internal funding is targeted, or a mix of the two, a carefully articulated case would have to be made in support of replacement of the two outdoor pools, contrary to the recommendations of the Aquatic Renewal Plan. In particular, the following issues would need to be addressed:

- Quantification of the additional costs (both capital and operating) compared to the service benefits which would result from such a service re-configuration.
- Public consultations in the Sunset Community. There has been a considerable public process with respect to the future of Mount Pleasant Park and Pool, but very little neighbourhood-based discussion in Sunset pertaining to the future of that pool.
- Location of the pools in terms of service gaps in the overall distribution of public pools throughout the city.

The compilation of this information, along with exploration of possible funding sources and the monitoring of participation trends generated by the new Renfrew and Killarney Pools will require extended study. This will occur over part of the period when current arrangements remain in place for the continued operation of Mount Pleasant and Sunset Pools. A report back on a longer term retention strategy is proposed by March of 2007.

As noted above, the Board may decide to retain either or both of the outdoor pools irrespective of the recommendations of the Aquatic Renewal Plan. However, the Board should be advised that changing the renewal program in this way will certainly modify its expected outcomes in one of the following ways:

- Additional funding, which has not been identified in previous long term budget forecasts, would have to be secured in whole or in part from the City to cover added capital and operating costs, or
- Funds will have to be reassigned within future capital and operating budgets to cover the unplanned for added costs. This would impair the ability of the Board to expand its aquatic capacity to the extent targeted. In effect, there would be a net loss in service overall to sustain localized service.

SUMMARY

This report recommends that the Board give formal approval to the current intention to continue the operation of the Mount Pleasant and Sunset outdoor pools until the end of the 2007 season, when the new Mount Pleasant and Sunset Community Centres are forecast to be open.

The Board is also asked to approve a process to re-evaluate the recommendations of the Aquatic Renewal Plan with respect to the retention of these two pools, including assessment of the impact of the first phase of aquatic renewal, consultation in the Sunset community, and identification of possible external funding sources.

Staff will report back with recommendations from this re-evaluation on or before March 2007.

Prepared by:

Planning and Operations
Board of Parks & Recreation
Vancouver, B.C.